

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

What is hand, foot, and mouth disease?

Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) is a common viral illness among infants and children usually caused by the Coxsackie virus. It usually occurs in the summer and early fall.

Who gets hand, foot, and mouth disease?

Infants and children under 10 years of age are at the greatest risk for the illness, but adult cases are not unusual. It frequently affects schools, daycare facilities, and summer camps.

How is hand, foot, and mouth disease spread?

HFMD is spread through direct contact with the infected person's nose and throat secretions, blister fluid, or saliva. It can also be passed through feces.

What are the symptoms of hand, foot, and mouth disease?

Symptoms usually appear three to five days after exposure and the illness usually lasts seven to ten days.

Symptoms include sudden onset of fever, sore throat, painful, blister-like sores in the mouth (appearing one to two days after onset of illness), loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting, and skin rash on the palms of hands and soles of feet. The rash may also appear on the knees, elbows, buttocks, or genital area.

How long is hand, foot, and mouth disease contagious?

Infected persons are most contagious during the first week of illness. The viruses that cause HFMD can remain in the body for weeks after a patient's symptoms have gone away. This means that the infected person can still pass the infection to other people even though he/she appears well. Also, some persons who are infected and excreting the virus, including most adults, may have no symptoms.

What is the treatment for hand, foot, and mouth disease?

There is no specific treatment for HFMD since it is caused by a virus. Persons with the disease should rest and may be given medication and liquids to control fever and pain associated with the disease. Aspirin should not be given to children.

Are there complications from hand, foot, and mouth disease?

HFMD is usually a mild disease and nearly all patients recover without medical treatment. Rarely, viral or "aseptic" meningitis can occur with HFMD.

How can hand, foot, and mouth disease be prevented?

The disease can be prevented by avoiding direct contact with infected persons and practicing good hygiene. Cover mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing and wash

hands frequently. Infected children should be excluded from daycare or school until fever has disappeared, no new sores are appearing, and child is feeling well enough to participate in regular activities.

It is also important to practice good housekeeping when caring for someone infected with the disease. Wash or throw away clothing or other items soiled with nose and throat discharges or stool. Scrub bathroom floors and toilet seats with a solution of one part bleach to ten parts water. Don't share eating or drinking utensils.

How do I get more information on hand, foot, and mouth disease?

Calhoun County Public Health Department

Phone: (269) 969-6383

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Web Site: <http://www.cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth/index.html>

Phone: (800) CDC-INFO or (800) 232-4636

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This fact sheet is meant to provide general health information and is not intended to be medical advice or otherwise take the place of your doctor's orders or to diagnose your specific health problems. Check with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your health.

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